

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Moana Umi, 58, lei seller

"We feel this [lei selling] is traditional for us. Because when this thing all started, started family, family, family all the way."

Moana Umi, Hawaiian-Chinese-Irish, was born July 31, 1927 in Kalihi, O'ahu. Her father was Libert Pakele. Her mother, Rachel Aanana, was a lei seller. When Umi was eleven years old, she began helping her mother sell leis on the waterfront and at their stand on Maunakea Street Downtown.

Umi attended Pu'uhale Elementary, Kalākaua Elementary, and, despite working long hours at her mother's lei stand, graduated from Farrington High School. She also took hula lessons and performed at hotel nightclubs.

In 1948, the family opened a lei stand on Lagoon Drive near the airport. Shortly thereafter, Moana married Charles Umi, an army man. They adopted two sons and two daughters.

Eventually, Umi opened her own business at the airport, Gladys Lei Stand, where today she is still hard at work, with the help of her sisters, children and grandchildren. She resides in Foster Village and is active in many social organizations, such as the Royal Order of Kamehameha I, of which she is president.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Moana Umi (MU)

October 30, 1985

Foster Village, O'ahu

BY: 'Iwalani Hodges (IH)

IH: This is an interview with Moana Umi at her home in Foster Village, Honolulu, Hawai'i on October 30, 1985. Interviewer is 'Iwalani Hodges.

Okay, Mrs. Umi, can we start out by asking you where you were born?

MU: Born in Honolulu.

IH: What part of Honolulu?

MU: In Honolulu. In Kalihi, actually, yeah.

IH: Oh, in Kalihi, mm hmm. And what was your mother's name?

MU: Rachel Aanana Pakele.

IH: What did your parents do when you were small?

MU: Oh, let's see, how far can I remember? How far you want me to go behind?

IH: Well, as far as you can remember.

MU: Oh, my dad used to work for stevedore in my young years. And my mother became a lei seller when she was (twenty).

IH: Oh, so that's way before you were born, then?

MU: Way before I was born.

IH: Oh. Is that because her mother was in the business? Was her mother in the business?

MU: (MU mishears question.) Well, let's say, I grew up into it. We all grew up into it, into the business, yeah. But then, not all of us ventured into it.

IH: But was your grandmother in the business before your mother?

MU: No, no.

IH: What do you think prompted your mother to go into the business at that young age?

MU: Well, you know in the olden years, you have family problem all the time. Not everybody's working, so my mom was the only one working at cannery. You know, helping to support the house, but sometimes, they never satisfied, the old folks. So, she had gone to see her lady friend. So her lady friend told her it best that she come out of the house and go seek this type of business. Because at that time, she used to see lei sellers selling down the streets, down at the pier. So she told my mom, "Well, better you go into the lei business and move away from the house so you can be independent of yourself." Because already my sister---I had a sister, and a brother, and another brother that was born already. I think I was, too, but I was very young then. I can't remember . . .

IH: She started having children at that young age?

MU: Who? My mom?

IH: Your mother.

MU: Yeah. She started having children because there's about twelve of us. So, she started, yeah. So the lady . . .

IH: So, she had her own family already?

MU: Yeah. But there was about three, I think, three or four of us that was already born. So, to keep away from the troubles and too many people. That's one thing with the Hawaiians. Too many people in one house, see. So, she moved on. My mother moved out. Then she ventured into the lei business. You know, it took a little bit time, but where we were staying (in Kalihi) had flowers. So, pick it over there. Then she bought some, picked some off the land, and stuff like that. She started to sell. She ventured into it. So, ever since then, she had moved into the business. Then after that when I could remember, we had a spot on Maunakea Street.

IH: On the sidewalk?

MU: On the sidewalk, we were selling leis. Used to be a Chinese paper store (on the right), then we had a bar (on the left). Then after the bar, came a training center--a boxing training center. So, we were right out there. And then, of course, my auntie folks was having a hard time also, so my mother had them next to her. It was her brother then, so. Then we were young. In time we all grew up, then she had some more children. Like my mother is such an energetic person, giving birth to one of my sisters down at the pier.

IH: She gave birth at the pier?

MU: Yeah. (Chuckles) But she drove herself, you know. She drove herself. That's how determined she is. I mean, didn't want to depend on other people. Well, anyway, this is the one that I have down with me [working at the lei stand], Lurline. That's why her name is Lurline. (Chuckles)

IH: Oh, because she was born at the pier?

MU: The ship was coming in that morning, that's why.

So, then we started on Maunakea [Street], so we grew up with it. So, out of all the children that we have had, some of them got married. You know, went away. Some of them didn't want to go into the business, so I was the only one that ventured into it [to own a lei stand at the airport] after my mom. And then, of course, my brother went into the florist business [Libert's Leis and Florist in the Salt Lake Shopping Center]. He was the oldest of the boys--second oldest (child). So, he went into the florist business. So he's still there, too. And so am I. But like in between, as you grow up with this, you have all kinds of things. Some good, some bad, but you got to look on the bright side of it all, see, in order to exist, yeah?

IH: Do you remember when you were small, did you have to go and pick flowers?

MU: Yes, of course. We have to get up five o'clock in the morning. We used to pick up pakalanas. The reason for that is, you got to pick it up before the sun comes up because the bees, see. And we have to pick up lehua blossoms (from the neighbor down the street, Leong's Cafe) and all of that, too.

IH: The bees don't come out till the sun comes up?

MU: Oh, yeah. They come out when the sun comes up. They're all over the place. So, you got to get out there before the sun rises. So, we used to pick up every morning before we go to school. We soak it down, keep it cool, then we come home and we string it up. Those were days, and we worked hard for so cheap.

IH: So, you picked up flowers before you went to school, then you went to school?

MU: Yeah. In the morning, we get up five o'clock in the morning.

IH: And then you come home and string 'em after school?

MU: Come home, we string it up. Sometimes we string late at night. My mom used to have---also, she had (Kaiser) Hawaiian Village. She used to supply them with the leis for the luau (during the '50s).

IH: The [Kaiser] Hawaiian Village?

MU: Yeah. Those times, at that time the leis ran into 1,000. You know, 1,200. We used to stay up late and string them.

IH: You were still in school?

MU: We go to school. We still have to go to school. Sometimes I used to sleep in school, I'm so tired. So the teacher said, "Did you have any rest?"

I said, "No, we have to work." You know, in order to keep my mother going in the business, everybody has to work. So there were times I used to be absent from school 'cause I couldn't get up. All of us. We all had our turn.

IH: Were there a lot of other children that had to work also in those days?

MU: We only know of us.

IH: The lei sellers.

MU: Yeah. But the lei seller's job is really a hard job. Lot of people feel, well, oh, we sit down all day. Oh, we just wrapped around flowers. We smell good all day. But it really isn't. It's a tedious, tired job. Now, they say, "Anybody can sell leis. Anybody can go pick up flowers and string it." But it's the time you give it. Now, some of them pick it up and they string it. Feels good the first few times that you do it. But then, if you stay with it, it isn't. It's a tiresome--lot of the old folks drop out because they can't handle it. But if you're a determined person and you're strong in your mind as well, because this is what's going to keep the rest of your body going, it's your mind. You got to keep yourself straight. But if you don't, then you lack all of that. Then you will go out, and do something else, then say, "The business is not for me. I can't hack this. I can't stay late at nights. I'm losing sleep. I don't eat regular." All those kind of things.

IH: So when you had to go out and pick flowers, where did you folks go?

MU: Where we were living.

IH: Oh, the neighborhood?

MU: We had a neighbor. Like, you know, Leong's Cafe? Leong's Hawaiian Food? They had those trees (pakalana, lehua) in there, so they let my mother pick them up. So, we used to pay them. My mom paid them some money. Yeah, because was a long time for that. Of course, we pick some of the 'ilimas at my granddad's yard. Was growing like hedges. Then he had plumerias and all those kind of things. But they let us pick it up.

IH: Was your mother down on Maunakea Street before she was going down to the boats [incoming and outgoing passenger ships]? Or she's down at

the boat first . . .

MU: Yes, she went down to (Maunakea Street) first. And then, after a while, then she went to (the boat).

IH: What was it like down at the boats, when the boats came in?

MU: Well, let me tell you. That's a story that people should really know what happened in our years. In those young years when I was young, I used to go. I used to go sell leis down at the ship when I was young, but I used to go with my mom, see. But then as the years grew for me, I got older. So I became eleven years old. So, my mom used to send me down at the ship. At that time, I was too young to sell leis by myself. My mom sent me down anyway. Okay. I used to go down there, and all the other ladies [lei sellers] used to get after me. They told me I cannot sell leis 'cause I'm too young. You know, was your mother . . .

IH: You were there by yourself? At eleven years old?

MU: Yeah. But they know of my mom, I figured, see. But it didn't matter. It's just that they didn't care to see any more other lei sellers there, other than them, and being as I was too young. Because the people came to buy from me 'cause I was a young girl. You know, just a little girl, so you figure the attention was taken away from the others, those that have been there much, much longer before me. So, anyway, I used to cry down at the ship. I come back up the stand with my leis and I tell my mom. So, the next day, when the boat comes in again, my mom goes down with me. I go down again with her. But see, I was never beaten. I went. It didn't matter, I went, anyway. Whether they yelled and screamed at me or not, I didn't care. So, my mom says, "Well, you go anyway." So, I went. I go again. Twelve years old, I was still going. Till I was fifteen, until I was sixteen, I did.

But do you realize the cost of the leis at that time? They were like ten for a dollar, twelve for a dollar. When the ship come in already, you get whatever they have in their arm for a dollar. So, I was too little to. . . . You know, I wasn't too high in height like the rest were. They threw the leis in their arms and stuff and collected the dollar. So, I couldn't do that. So I just stood there on the sidewalk. And the people came to me, anyway, 'cause I was the youngest lei seller. But anyway, so I just kept on going, whether they yelled and screamed at me. At that time, Phillip [Officer Phillips] that's the old man, Hawaiian, he was a lousy guy. He's a lousy cop. So, he's always yelling at me. So I put my leis in my basket, and I stay there. But when he's not looking, I take it out and I sell it.

IH: Oh, because you're not supposed to sell down there?

MU: No, I'm not supposed to because I'm too young. I have to be sixteen in order to sell.

IH: Oh, that was a ruling?

MU: That's the law, it was. Sixteen years old, you have to be. So, finally, as the years went by for me, I became sixteen. Go down with leis and sell. I go down to the ship and I already accustomed to it because I kept doing it anyway. I go down, the lei sellers say, "You know, you cannot do that."

I say, "Don't you ever tell me I cannot anymore."

So, he, Phillip say, "What you doing over there? You not supposed to be selling."

I say, "I let you know I'm sixteen now, Uncle Phillip. So, I no like you folks yell at me no more, okay?"

So, after that, I started to come down to sell lei. Mrs. Kalama, Becky Kalama, she's been the president for the [Hawaiian] Lei Sellers Association at the pier for quite a many years. She's a fighter, a grappler. Anything you want to ask of that woman, she is. And she fights for the rights of the lei sellers. So, she became attached to me, and I became attached to her. So every time I go down, she helps me out. She help me to sell my leis if I don't have, if I have too much left over, or whatever. So, she became a dear friend to me. Ever since then, as I grew up, she was always there for me.

As time went by, the years went by, new lei sellers came. They were getting younger. The old folks no longer could sell. Like I always feel, you don't yell at the person, you don't scream and holler because some day going to be your kids. You don't want me to go yelling at your kids that they cannot sell leis because they're young. So, I always tell them, those people. I say, "Don't do to me, because someday somebody else will do it to your mo'opunas or to your children. You can never tell." But see, I was the kind of girl that can almost. . . . I have like a woman's intuition. I seem to look at the person and just see what I could do to straighten them out. The old folks, you know, tell them, "You folks shouldn't do that because you folks are elder. You folks should know better than to do stuff like that. Everybody needs to eat. Everybody needs a job. Everybody needs the money. So, share." I used to tell them. So, they couldn't get over me, talking things like that.

But then, as I grew older, seventeen, eighteen, I was still selling until I was twenty-three down at the ship. So then, finally, we go and get married. (Chuckles) I go get married. But I had a good husband [Charles Umi]. He was in the service. So I used to go out and pick flowers, and take it down to the boat, and go sell it. Take Mom's leis and go down and sell it. But the leis was just so cheap for that kind of money.

IH: How many leis would you sell in one day?

MU: You can never tell. We never ever did count. We just take what we had and just sell it. The thing is to get rid of it and don't bring it back.

IH: Did you do that most of the time? Get rid of all your leis?

MU: No, not really. Not really. Because most of the time, they [the other lei sellers] chase the car. When the car coming up to the pier, where they go into the pier, soon as the car pull up, everybody's on both sides of the windows, sticking their heads in, throwing their leis in, collecting the dollar. I wasn't about to do that.

IH: I thought they weren't allowed to do that.

MU: They weren't, but they do it.

IH: Oh, but they still did it?

MU: Yeah, they still did it. As long as Uncle Phillip not looking.

IH: There must have been a lot of lei sellers down there.

MU: Yeah, there was.

IH: Maybe about twenty or thirty at one time?

MU: So, if you feel I couldn't sell all my leis, look at the old folks that couldn't get up and throw the leis in the car. They sitting alongside the sidewalk. They can't even get their leis sold. Because they put their leis all in the baskets and sit there, just wait for the walking customers to come by. So if the guys way up on the beginning of the street coming down, they'll buy it there. But some guys just want to travel and see what everybody have. If they see something that they like, they buy it. They used to have like eight, ten ginger leis in the hand. Just give 'em a buck, them gingers are going. See, plumerias, mixed up plumerias, gingers, everything mixed up in their hand. And what you see is what you get for a buck. So it was hard years for us to keep.

And then when my mom started to get the Hawaiian Village in, we used to just string 'em and give 'em. And how much you think the darn things were? Thirty-five cents a lei. Three leis for a buck, five [cents]. And all that time, staying up and stringing it and stringing it. We have to make the leis for the luau portion. And then, Mom was doing Alfred Apaka's lei, also. He had a special lei, and he only wanted my mom to do it.

IH: Oh, yeah? And did she . . .

MU: Yes. His lei have to be a certain carnation, this red carnation always, and that lei never went large. It's a small lei and he'd wear it. Carnation, they call it the "J." I don't know why they call it, I only know it as a "J" carnation because they're small

ones, locally grown. That was his kind of lei. And my mom had the pleasure of doing that for him until he no longer . . .

(Telephone rings. Interview stops, then resumes.)

IH: We're talking about . . .

MU: Alfred Apaka.

IH: Yeah, Alfred Apaka.

MU: So, my mom made his leis, and my mom made [Henry J.] Kaiser's wife's lei, too. So she had the pleasure of doing that for a long time as long as he [Apaka] sang at the hotel [Kaiser Hawaiian Village]. Then, of course, you know he went on trips for this Aloha Week things that he was in and all of that. So finally when he passed away, everything stopped for my mom. And then, of course, the luau leis, I don't know what happened after that. We didn't do anymore. For quite a few years we did it. I think was somebody else. Like in this type of business, somebody else always gets into the act. If you have something, then somebody says, "Oh, we better go down. Get it little cheaper." And so, they will go. Those people will go cheaper because they got to make money, too. Even if a ten cents drop of a lei because you figure 1,000 leis. And ten cents dropped out of 1,000 leis, that's quite a bit of money. That's how it went. I think my mom lost the contract after that. But we were getting tired already of doing because it involved the school, our schoolwork, and our time in school. Sometimes I couldn't even hold my head up.

IH: Were you able to graduate from school?

MU: Yeah, we did.

IH: After working all that much? Working all that time, you were still able to graduate?

MU: Yeah, yeah. Well, my teachers all knew what we were doing, you see. At that time, teachers normally get familiar with the parents and the children. They made themselves to be known that "I'm her teacher," and stuff like that. So, they knew. And of course, one of the teachers were singing as a musician.

(Telephone rings. Interview stops, then resumes.)

MU: . . . they are competition, as far as pricewise is concerned. My mother no longer serviced the luau. Of course, the people that worked for the luau is always normally local people. They says, "Oh, that's okay. My friend can help you and get your leis cheaper." So, go from a friend to a friend. They do it today. They do it also today in the tour companies, like that. If I happen to quit one place, I go work for another. They says, "Oh, where you getting your leis from?"

I say, "Well, I get 'em from Gladys" or something.

They say, "Ey, my friend can give you cheaper."

But see, what happen, these are backyard people. See, they goes in the yard or they go pick 'em up from somebody else's place, stuff like that. And then they go and sell it. What happens when the wintertime comes along? They can't supply it. So, they come back and says, "Oh, Gladys, we used to deal with you. We want to pick up 250 leis."

I says, "Well, if I remember right, you folks left me, right? And somebody else supplied the leis?"

They say, "Yeah."

I says, "Well, you know, the board is selling three dollars a lei. So if you want 250 leis, you got to buy what the board is selling. All depends what kind."

She says, "Well, we just want tour leis."

I says, "Well, that's what it is. Even if it's a tour lei, it's three dollars."

"But, oh, we used to deal with you."

I said, "That's understood. But when you walk away from me, then you have to deal with the other person that you folks got it from. And they cannot supply it, then you gotta pay what I'm selling. Because I don't deal that way. I felt that you had a deal going. You had a one cheap price going through the year and a lower price in the summer, but away you folks went. So, there's nothing more I can do for you. If you want you take the leis for the price I'm selling, the tour leis." So, they forced to buy it. They have to buy it. Many a time the different tours come down, give everybody the business. They go get 'em from different guys [lei stands]. But they have to pay the price. They loser. They cannot make money. They lose it. Because some of them are selling more than three dollars. They selling it for four dollars. So, they have to buy it for four bucks. Because the carnations are made one tuberose, one carnation, not two tuberose, one carnation. And they selling it for four to five bucks. So you take it for four dollars. So when they come to me, I says, "Well, you spent four dollars on that lady's lei, you give me four dollars." (Chuckles) You understand what I'm saying? What's good for the goose is good for the gander. But anyway, they have to pay. But lot of these tour companies pick up on backyard growers and they have a hard time in the winter to get it.

But then, all the companies---I have companies that been with me for a long time. I service them through the year. I try not to raise the price on it. But like they say, the economy grows, the

price gets higher. I can't keep the same [price], I'm not going to survive that way. So if you want to see me again next year, then help me. Because then it's up to you to catch your client for what the cost is. Got to find a way to do it. Because they sell the leis within the package deal. So, sometimes the people don't realize that they are also paying for their own lei. The company is not giving it for free. You understand? So, they are paying for their own package deal. I'm sure lot of those people doesn't know it. Well, that's how it is. But for me, I've been in this thing for a long time. I've grown up with it. It's many, many years for me. 'Cause my sisters worked with me. They don't know of anything else.

(Interview stops, then resumes.)

IH: Okay.

MU: Sometimes off the book sounds better than on.

(Laughter)

MU: You get yourself set up, yeah, for it. So, anyway, what was we saying?

IH: Let's see, I forget where we were now.

MU: I supposed to put 'em on a book and I forgot what it was. Oh, we was talking about our years at the Downtown, yeah? Maunakea Street.

IH: Did you folks have the same kind of flowers when you were down at the boat days and Maunakea Street [as you do today]?

MU: Well, as the years went by, we started to have gingers, tuberose, carnations, plumerias. They came out at that time of the year for us, also.

IH: You know, I was thinking, if you had to buy your gingers and carnations . . .

MU: Well, most of the time, you bought. Most of the time we bought, except for pakalana.

IH: How could you sell the leis for ten cents, one?

MU: That's it.

IH: Ten for a dollar?

MU: You can't. If nothing, you have to just bring it back and give it away. Because once you get your leis tied up and you take it out to sell, you no longer. . . . You know, you put it on your arm, you ruin it already. So, if you don't sell it and you bring it back to the stand, you have to give it away.

IH: But the flowers must have been really cheap in those days then.

MU: Oh, yes. It has to be for us to be selling like that. So, trying to make twenty dollars is like trying to look for the needle in the haystack. That's how hard it was to make twenty dollars. And twenty dollars, how far can you go? Although things were little cheaper than it is today, but still. Eat saimin every day right across the street [Downtown]. (Chuckles) So, we are fanatics for saimin. We've grown up into saimin children. So even till today, we still do that. It's not because we can't afford to eat something good, but it's just because this was our childhood type of thing, food that we ate. So we got to like it, regardless. So even though we went to restaurant today and, oh, on the table, somebody ordered something else, I still have to have a saimin because this is what I grew up with.

(Laughter)

MU: Still old-fashioned, you know. Eat sardine, corned beef, and all that kind of stuff. Because that's what we had in the years before. Bread and jelly, taro and butter. So, you see, I go to school with taro and butter, bread and jelly, butter and bread. (Chuckles) One ball rice with shōyu.

(Laughter)

MU: So life for us is hard in the olden days.

IH: Yeah. And how many hours a day would your mother spend down [at the lei stand] on [Maunakea] Street?

MU: Oh, my mother spends a whole bunch of hours. Whole bunch of hours, she does. When she can open her eyes till she closes it. So, she work real hard, my mom. I felt like that, like how people feel for me today, my children. Why I put so much time in my job. I used to feel like that for my mom. She puts---I was young, but I know how hard she works. I used to tell her, "Oh, Mom, why you working so hard?"

She says, "Well, how we going to live? It's our bread and butter."

And my dad when there was job, there's job. When the stevedores strike, you know how long they strike. So, the problem is on. So we all have to work.

IH: When they have those dock strikes and stuff and the boats didn't come in, how did that affect the lei sellers that were going down to the waterfront?

MU: Well, we wait for people that going dancing, or people have parties, people have weddings, those kind of things. And then, you have to generate customer. See, that's the most important thing, is the customer. So if you have a lot of customers--my mother was handicapped

[i.e., given an advantage] by the [Kaiser Hawaiian] Village. 'Cause everybody knew her then at the Village because of the leis that we did take over there. They sent people to the lei stand to buy leis from her. Then, of course, Lucky Luck folks was all over there [Kaiser Hawaiian Village], too. So, they did their show there, Lucky Luck, right? So my mother was part of that program. When she comes down in the morning, they advertises her lei stand because she put leis right there on the show for display and stuff. And "Rachel's Lei Stand, Maunakea Street," they used to advertise it. She was on with Lucky Luck for quite a while. So, that was a handicap for her, as far as businesswise. But then . . .

IH: How long was she down on Maunakea Street?

MU: My mom?

IH: Was it quite a while?

MU: Chee, for a long time, my mom was there. I can't tell you how many years.

IH: Did she have to pay the shop owner [that she had her stand in front of]?

MU: No, we didn't have to pay nobody, because we sat on the sidewalk. It's up to the owner to let you sit there. So when the people own the shop over there or whatever it was, the boxing gym or the beer bar like that, so we got to know the people, the owners. They say, "Oh, you folks can stay outside there." They never did ask for money. You know, maybe fifteen dollars for us to sit down out there or anything. All those stores, they didn't do that. They just let us sit there. And that's business for them, right? Attracts people to come there.

IH: Did anybody ever complain about you folks being on the sidewalk? Like nowadays, they complain about the vendors on the sidewalk in Waikīkī.

MU: They never did. Then after a while, they did. They made it a law where we couldn't sell leis on the sidewalk unless you had an alley that you can go into or a store that you can go into. But what was the saddest part of it all is we were too young to know better. Or we were too young--what we could do with money, how you could make better use of your money to your advantage. No. Like there's one shop in there, Cindy's [Lei Shoppe on Maunakea Street]. Now, the mother folks own the building. So she can stay there for a lifetime because they own that building right there. Now, if at that time we were wiser or smarter, even thinking that we could also buy a building over there on Maunakea Street. Or even the lei sellers, they got together, buy the block or half a block of a building. Put all their monies together, make a little corporation, see, they could have bought a spot in there. And they say, "This is ours. We can all sell leis right there for a lifetime because

we own the building." Maybe now today, you could make different spots for yourself, a little shop. And everybody have their own little shop. See, but at those years, we never thought of things like that. Even our parents. We never learn from the Pākē. We should have learned from him that was his own, that he bought it outright.

So with all the lei sellers we had, was my mom, my aunt (Annie Alana), the Iaukeas, the (Pa'ahaos). Across was Auntie Carrie (Kekahi'o), the Fernandez. That's three, four, five, six--there were seven of us on that block. So, if they had band together and somebody was smart, we could have done just that. Now, we had a lawyer upstairs, Frank Loo. He was a lawyer upstairs. It's just too bad nobody go sit down with him and be a good friend to him where he could have advised them. Or even have a lawyer. Let the lawyer maintain them where they can get some advice from them to better themselves on the street where they can go negotiate for a building or something like that. Buy out the spot. But we were too young and didn't know any better. Just growing up stringing flowers, that's all we were doing.

See, so even if we went to school, we were too tired. Sometimes we're back with our schoolwork and stuff like that. We were grown up on the street. When we were born, my mother raised us in a car. From the car in a box. You know, flower boxes? Sit it right down where she is, and (chuckles) grew us up that way until we got old enough. Then we started to go home and back and forth. Take the time. My dad come down, pick us up, go home take a bath, bring us back again. So we started out raising our children that way, too, down the streets. My son, my oldest boy, I raised him down the street.

IH: Did your father also help with the lei stand?

MU: Yes, he helped. But most time, he stayed home. He kept the house most of the time because somebody had to keep the house. You know, cook for whoever was home or cook for my mom. She wanted something, we'd bring it down in the afternoon or in the evening for her. Because my mom is a simple woman. She likes cracker and coffee, and sardine or salmon. Lot of restaurants on the street, but she didn't care for those. She eat what she wants to eat.

So, then the years went up for us. Then Mrs. [Lily] Kahaulelio had one of those wagons [Lily's Lei Stand] down at the airport at the time.

IH: On Lagoon Drive?

MU: They had all the wagons out on the Lagoon [Drive]. So Joseph Kahaulelio's mom had one of the stands. And her stand was that. . . . I forgot what number was that, was my mom's. Number eleven, I think, was my mom's number. Mrs. Kahaulelio's wagon was the eleventh one. So, she asked my mom. Because she used to pick up flowers from my mom, Joseph's mother. If she couldn't afford

it, my mom used to give her flowers to go and sell or give her leis that's already made to go down. So, one day she asked my mom if my mom would come down and help her. So then, we took care the stand [on Maunakea Street]. We were old enough already. So we took care of the stand, and my mom used to go down with her and help her string and sell leis. 'Cause the old lady was getting older. She was getting tired. She had plenty kids, but they didn't look at it that way. They didn't care to go into it, to go help the old lady. So my mom worked with her for quite a few years, helping her until she no longer could come down to the stand. So what she did, she went to the State Transportation [Hawai'i Aeronautics Commission] and gave my mother the stand. That's how my mother have the stand today.

IH: Oh, so she was already in the grass shacks? They were already in the grass shacks when your mother got it?

MU: (No), I think from the wagon.

IH: From the wagon--then that wasn't on state [territory] property yet.

MU: I don't know how she negotiated that. See, 'cause I never did ever ask my mom of how she started all of this.

IH: But when your mother took over, it was on the wagons?

MU: I think, yeah. I think from there. Then when she went inside, then her name went on the list.

IH: Yeah, that was automatic. What was the significance in the numbers of the stands?

MU: The significance on that is the amount of cars that was in there. Like one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight and ten, eleven, twelve.

IH: Why were you assigned numbers even from the days of the wagons?

MU: It didn't matter on the numbers. The only thing that mattered over there is what number you were when you came in there, see. Because you see, this number moved inside of the grass shack the way it is, the way it was outside from the beginning, where maybe Harriet was number one, Sophie number two, three was Onaga, so forth, Dorothy, so forth and so on. So my mother was the eleventh truck that was over there.

IH: Does that mean she was the eleventh person that came in?

MU: Eleventh person in there, the old lady, Kahaulilio. Then Irene's pulled in. She became twelve. And then, thirteen, and fourteen, and so on, whatever number there was. 'Cause then, when the state [territory] asked them to move in, everybody agreed to move in. No thinking. Still again, they could have bought property over there,

all the lei sellers that was there. If they had band together again, they could have bought that property that was there.

IH: The Damon Tract property?

MU: Yeah, where they were. All this money. All they have to get one smart person to take care of it. Get a lawyer and all that kind of thing, and buy the place. They could have still been there. Well, maybe it wouldn't be that good. Because you figure, as time went by, they moved on.

IH: They moved the airport, yeah.

MU: You see? They moved it away. So I don't think it would have been a good idea. Well, anyway, everybody agreed to move in and felt it would be better. The state [territory] said, "I'll give you this and that," and so forth. So, was a good idea. So they built them the shack. Then the old lady no longer was with my mom, then she passed away. As the years went by, things got little tougher, little harder. The state [territory] started to clamp down on everybody. Some of them went out of business right there, at the second [stand]. For the first time on state [territory] property. And, well, people were---well, money looked good. It was getting better. The customers had an easy way to get in. Just pull in and pull out. Got right out. The traffic flow was . . .

IH: Was when you folks were at the grass shacks now, you're talking about?

MU: Yeah, when we went to the grass shack. So, you pull out of there. So the flow of traffic was easier, money was fine, getting better. More than what you seen before. Okay, so it went on and on, and then some of the lei sellers passed on, left, and their children pulled up, got into the business with it. But how can you come away from it? Because it seems like that's the only thing for you, otherwise it goes back to the state. Then they had a list of names. Whoever. If anytime the stand is vacant, they can put in somebody else. But at that time was all family in there mostly.

IH: On the list?

MU: Except my mom.

IH: Oh, you mean on those stands?

MU: See, because you're taking from Harriet [Serrao], Sophie [Ventura], those were all related already, people. Dorothy [Onaga].

IH: Yeah Dorothy was there.

MU: And all of them were all relation.

IH: They're all related, yeah.

MU: [Edward] La'anui [of Eddie and Alice's Lei Stand] was related to Gladys [Chung of Gladys Lei Stand], the one that I have now. They were family. All the people they pulled in in the early years were family related. So, I don't know, as the years went by, somebody said, "Well, this was my car. I had to give it up because this person moved in." This is what I hear. But still we were too young to know. We were in the teens, but all we did was work, like I say. So, how else? (Chuckles) We didn't know anything, eh? Then later on, we moved one more time. Second phase [the wooden building], in the airport. Then it got tougher in there, businesswise. We were too close to each other. Arguments, we used to have. And all those kind of things.

IH: Business got little bit harder as far as customers and everything like that?

MU: Yeah. Customers. But my mom had followers, so that was all right for her. Some of them [the lei sellers] went out to solicit the business. Some of them went to sponsors for business. But then, what did you get out of that? They didn't get anything out of it. Because you sponsor, and those people never came to patronize your stand. So what's the sense of sponsoring? They go somewhere else to get their leis. So you would figure, if I sponsored. You said, "Oh, Rachel, how about sponsoring us?" I'm talking to you, right? So anytime something happen, they needed leis, that person don't come and say, "Well, Rachel, we need leis. Maybe 100 leis, thirty leis." They never did that. So, I tell my mom, "What's the sense of sponsoring somebody that you can't even get any business from? It's not worth it."

But we had some other stands that were doing that. Bowling. Sponsoring bowling. Up their tails they had [i.e., there were many], but people don't come by. Then when they have a party, a dinner, for the bowlers, for the winners, and stuff like that, they take their leis, give it to the guy free. You backing off on your business. You're going down the drain already. So my mom never did do that. She was sponsoring a couple of teams and I told her, "Mom, you're not going to gain nothing from that. If they come and they buy leis from you, okay." I'm starting to get little bit smarter. Took a while. So I told my mom, "You got to quit it. Because otherwise, you going to come like that other lady next door." Taking the leis, giving it away, and don't gaining from it. She makes ten bunches ginger with one lei. She pack it down there. And how much maybe cheaper? Even you say two dollars, or dollar half, you still. How many dollar halves makes ten bunches [fifteen dollars is the cost of the flowers]? Or even two dollars of that? And you make it into one lei. One double ginger. Not worth it. But the competition was great.

IH: So, why do you think the business decreased when you moved from the grass shacks to the next building?

MU: I thought the grass shack was a little bit more private.

IH: Oh, private?

MU: Yeah. Because you have your own little shack. You were not side by side like the second phase. If your shack was here, the next shack was there (about fifteen feet away). Because the leis were all sitting [hanging] on the sides like this, so the people come in, they can see it. But then we were individual. You don't have to hear what I'm selling or you don't have to hear what I'm saying. But next door to each other in the second phase, all the guy [customer] have to do is move over, and he'll move over if he sees what he like's on the other side. See? And then, arguments start if you stealing my customer, you're calling my customer. So those days were just rugged days. You got to learn how to fight back, or they gnaw at you all the time.

So my children started young. When I come away from my mom to go into my own, my children started young. My children were teenagers. So, the person next to me didn't like the idea because my daughter was selling leis when she was young. That's my kuleana. That's my stand. You're not paying my bills. I'm paying my own rent. You have all that kind of arguments like that coming out. They didn't like the kids sitting out there. Because I used to go pick up my flowers and come back, so my daughter used to sit in front. But people have this kind of feeling. You can come all the way down from number one [lei stand]. But when they see a child there, you will automatically go there, yeah? When they see children. 'Cause I will do that. Because I feel, when you older you can hustle. When you see a young girl or young boy outside there, they automatically stop there and they will go buy their leis from them. So, the lady next door to me didn't like the idea. Figured like calling. I said, "No. Ey, this is business."

IH: Did that cause problems with other stands when your children worked?

MU: Yeah. But then, I used to argue with them and I used to tell them, "You know, you have children and they going to have children. One of these days your grandchildren will be selling leis next to me. And I'm not going to like that either. I'll probably tell them, 'I don't think you should be here.' I'll probably [be] calling the customers to divert it away from you. So I don't think you'd like that. That's the same thing with me. We don't bother nobody." I tell my children, "You never bother nobody. You just do like you supposed to do."

But you know, when you get older folks working, they always want to be--you cannot tell them nothing. They got these old ways of doing things that you can't change them. They won't listen, even if it's to better businesses or stuff like that. I've come through some hard times down there. But like anything else, if I learn to stand up on my feet when I was young, selling leis at the ship, I did the same thing down at the airport. I fought it, I didn't care. Unless you pay my rent, you pay me, you say anything you want. But other than that, don't tell me nothing. I didn't like that. But now we

have the younger kids. The guys of our ages and stuff like that.

(IH gets ashtray for MU.)

MU: So we get along. We have meetings where we can speak out, whatever you want to. If you have a problem, say it. You don't like it, you got to cope with it or whatever you want to do with it. You speak your mind. Try to solve all our problems right there.

IH: Yeah, that's always better.

MU: Instead of go back to the work and doing it there. Oh, it's such bad taste out there to try to get your (chuckles) problems settled out there, yelling at each other. So, we don't think like the older folks. We're trying to better ourselves. And trying now to put our foot out and generate some more business for ourselves like publicizing our business as a--we have a special sale on a holiday. What kind of holiday it is. Maybe Gladys Leis will be selling specials for Easter. At least something for the public. Because right now, there's so much florist on the outside. They don't have to come to the airport. You understand? Too far for them. So they say, everybody says, this wahine says, "Oh, you folks sell your folks' leis too expensive."

I said, "So does everyplace else." Let me tell you, the flower shops are just as expensive. Maunakea Street is also. But you know, you take the ginger lei from the airport. You go around the block, you still have your ginger lei. You take a ginger lei from Maunakea Street, you go around the block, and you won't have it no longer. That's the difference between the airport. Now, if you come to me and you say, "I want a nice lei." I say, "It's five dollars for the ginger 'cause it's nicely made." Now, you asking me for find a nice lei. So I tell you it's a five-dollar lei because it's nicely made, don't tell me that's expensive . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

IH: . . . at Maunakea Street?

MU: So, let's say, if Maunakea Street is selling the ginger lei for four dollars or three dollars. But it doesn't look like mine. It doesn't look like the lei that I made at all. That's your difference between pricewise.

IH: Do you think the florists have taken a lot of business from you folks?

MU: I would think so, too. But the reason they feel that the airport is expensive, all depends. There's twelve of us over there. You never went to everybody. Okay, so you drive up, you pull into the first

stand, the second stand. Those are already set in. You automatically drive in there. So those stands there, so they can make it [the higher price] in the front there, so they make it. So if you sell a double tuberose for fifteen, now maybe if you walked further upward, I would sell it for twelve dollars. Did you ever think about that? So, not all of us are expensive. Now, the guys on the end portion have to take their chances. So, the lei stands in the front get the first choice, no matter how much you look at it. This is why, like I said, the numbers was important. Because when we moved to the third phase [the present location], they [Department of Transportation] wanted to draw lot on it. And they [lei sellers] wouldn't let it happen, okay? Because if they drew lot, you don't know where you going to be. So they know of number one, number two, number three, and number four, how they stand already, as far as making money. So if they happen to be going down our way and getting number twelve or number eleven, they never ever going to see it. Because it's not going to be like having number one, number two, and number three. It won't ever be the same, moneywise. So, they have first preference.

(Telephone rings. Interview stops, then resumes.)

MU: So, like I tell the customers, I told my friend, she was trying to get some advertisement from the newspaper people so they can publicize in the newspaper some of the things that we'd like to share with the public. So when she started to tell me something about like that [how expensive the leis are at the airport], I said, "So is the outside." You take Sharon. Sharon is expensive. I sell my 'ilima for eight dollars, she sells hers for nine. Some of them sell it for ten.

IH: That's the florist, Sharon's Florist?

MU: Sharon's, Downtown [Sharon's Leis, part of Maunakea Leis and Flowers]. Now, everybody have a different price for different leis, so how can you say it's expensive at the airport? We all have the same kind of leis that everybody string. Downtown, flower shop, airport. Everybody sells it different price. Double gingers. Anytime you say you like a nice lei, anytime you go into a double lei, you not going to have 'em for five dollars, like a single ginger. It's understood. So when you sell your nice leis, you tell 'em the price. If they don't want it, you go into something else. You go with what they have to spend and you deal with it that way.

I don't know why people seem to always stack up the airport against Downtown. And of course, Downtown has the business because it's convenient. You know, people can go right there off the bus, off the taxi before they go down. Parking space, it's available for them right there. But like this, they have to drive from wherever all the way to the airport. It's senseless for them to do that when they could just buy it in town or buy it in the flower shop wherever they are, Kailua, Waimānalo, or whatever. Up 'Aiea and all of that, they can buy it right there. So why should they come all the way to

the airport? Now, before, they didn't have as much florists as they have today. Today, everyplace you look it's there.

IH: And they all sell leis.

MU: See? They all sell leis, also. But before, some of them only sold flowers. They didn't sell leis because it's too much work. But now, if you don't do it, you lost out. So you have to sell what the public wants. So same thing with us at the airport. If you sell only leis, you not going to make out, either. You got to venture into anything you can do, whatever knowledge you have, you know what to make. Weddings, wreaths, arrangements, and all those kind of things. 'Cause I do that. But the airport [Department of Transportation] once upon a time stopped the people from doing that. They didn't want us to do it. They didn't want us to sell anthuriums. But we had to do that. Because of the shop in the airport having the franchise over flowers. Then he ventured into leis, so, ey, that was wrong already for him to do that. 'Cause we only selling leis. Why should he sell leis then if he doesn't want us to sell flowers? So we fought the problem. So they allowed us to sell anthurium. But we were selling anyway. That's how to make the money. You got to make money one way or the other. You cannot just sell leis. It just won't do it. So whatever way you can make money, you got to do it. Because the state says they don't care how you do your business or whatever. You can do. That's your kuleana. The thing is that you pay your share to the state, whatever is due. That's how it goes as far as they're concerned.

IH: Have you always been selling leis? Have you ever had any other jobs?

MU: Well, before, I used to work in a restaurant, in a cafe. I worked in a bar. I enjoyed that most of all until they had to break the place down. He lost his--you know, somebody bought the lease for the building. Which was exciting. I would liked to have worked in there for years and years. That's my greatest desire. I love being a barmaid.

IH: Was that before you got married?

MU: Yeah, before I was married. Oh, but no. I was married. I had a husband, my first husband. He passed away. That's how come I worked in the bar. Too much of a memory. So I need to get away. I was working with my mom, also. But mom said she thinks I better go work something else to keep me much busier. So I went to work there and help my mom at the same time. So, that kept me going for about two years. I worked in there, and then I got married. (Laughs) And then they closed the joint down. Built a drugstore over there, at the corner. So I'd come away from there. Then I'd help my mother ever since after that.

IH: So when your mother had taken over Mrs. Kahalelio's stand, were you still down on Maunakea Street?

MU: Yeah.

IH: So you folks ran the two stands?

MU: Yeah.

IH: Then when did you have to leave Maunakea Street?

MU: When they started to put the law out there that we couldn't be selling leis on the street anymore. So we hauled away and went to the airport. And ever since then, we worked at the airport. So, those were the years until Mrs. Chung next door couldn't work anymore and she asked my mom if I would like to take over the stand. Was kinda hard, yeah, for my mom because I worked with her for all our years. To come away from there. But I felt that eventually we had to do something. We can't always live under my mother's wing. Because we were married. We . . .

IH: Yeah. Plus two stands would be better than just the one, huh?

MU: Eventually we would have a family. So, with the love of God, I moved. Asked my mom for her blessing to come next door. Although it spoiled the image, seeing me next door, being they know I was Rachel's daughter, in a way. In a way, spoiled the image.

IH: Oh, how do you mean?

MU: Like, okay, so I got my own stand, right? They know I'm Rachel's daughter. So you would think I would be working for my mother. So what am I doing on the stand next door?

IH: Oh, competing against her?

MU: Not competing, but I didn't feel it that way. I didn't feel like a competition. I felt like I need to go out on my own because I remarried. I got married again and then we had started a family. We had three children at the time. So, I went on my own. But still, I helped my mom. When she's tired, I sit on her stand and help her to sell her leis. And my children sit (chuckles) on my stand selling leis also. So when she needed help, I sent my children over to help her.

So with my sisters and brothers. But my oldest brother went out to work and my second brother went out to work, so left the girls. So there was my oldest sister and my two younger sisters and myself. I had another sister, but that wasn't her bag. She didn't want to have anything to do with flowers, which was smart of her to do that. She wanted to be a pianist. But she didn't venture into it. We tried to teach her to play ukulele, sing, dance hula. She didn't like that either. So, then she got married as the years went by. Then she went to the Mainland to live. She's doing a darn good job. She's a supervisor for a restaurant. You know, buying, selling whatever. She's doing a beautiful job. She's been up there for

quite a many years. She comes home once in a while. So, she made a successful thing of herself.

IH: But you and the two of your sisters are still with the lei business?

MU: No, just me and my brother [own businesses]. My brother has a florist.

IH: But your sisters still work with you?

MU: Yeah. My sister work with me for many, many years. The one that was always in the stand.

IH: Lurline?

MU: Yeah. And then, my sister (Josephine) was with my mom. My other sister work with me, then she go with my mom. But we all feel that's my mom. So we help her whenever I can. But I still take care of my family, regardless. I'm like their mother or their big aunt or stuff like that. That's how it is with me. You have family arguments, but your love for each other will never go away. So I take care of them, too. So my sister, I have a young sister. She works for a florist. She's a designer for flower arrangements and things. She does all kinds of things. Very 'eleu, that one. But Lurline, she's a very hardworking girl. She's got that one mind as far as that is concerned--her family and helping me. We come a long way, my sister and I. She's got a good husband and her children. So now her children all grown up, they're married, they work, each other. The girl works.

So this is where we are today. Now days, it's a struggling business. You really have to struggle to make out. You got to have your customers. You got to sometimes do the unexpected things for your customers. Do some promoting of your own. You got to go. They say, "Oh, Moana, could you deliver us a lei?" And now days, you get it from the florist, you deliver, all depends where you going, cost you fifteen bucks to deliver. I jump on my car and I do it. But then, the recommendation become yours. They says, "Ey, go get leis from Moana. She's terrific person." Local people. I like to deal locally as much as possible, although, you know, not all of them got the money to come and buy. Some, they say, "Moana, can I charge?" (Chuckles) And sometimes you got to go hunt for them and stuff like that. But this is how you got to do it.

IH: Is that who most of your customers are? Local people?

MU: Yeah. I deal with the hālaus also.

IH: Has it always been that way that . . .

MU: Always been with me.

IH: . . . it's local customers?

MU: Yeah. So, like, Bobby folks have a fundraiser. Na Wai 'Ehā had fundraisers or they need a sponsor. I sponsor that kind of thing because they will always turn around and look for you again. Says, "Auntie, can we have x number of leis" or "Could you sell us flowers?" They going to make their own leis.

I say, "Fine."

I do just that. I become their auntie all the time. You know, Hawaiian style, 'ohana. So, those kids do have a lot of respect for me, and so I do for them, also. Like Bobby folks when they come down. They do a lot of business.

IH: Bobby who?

MU: The Cazis. The Cazimero, Leina'ala [Heine] folks. Even the hālaus.

IH: Oh, they buy flowers from you, too.

MU: Yeah. Mountain Apple Company and all of those guys. Even the other hālaus when they come, like, oh, quite a bit of them I have, when they like something. Some, they like only the flowers. I give them, sell them the flowers. And I don't sell them for two more pennies more. Sometimes I sell them for what I buy it, nothing in exchange. No more extra money, like that, 'cause I don't see it that way. So, the thing is, if I have too much flowers, I'm willing to let it go for what I buy it because I'll get rid of it instead of having it and try to suffer to sell it. Sometimes if you don't, plumerias, if you keep it the next day, it's not going to last like you do with other kinds of flowers that will keep. But this is how I promote me that way.

So, I do hope maybe sometimes in the future, my children will learn it. But I don't think they even want to venture into it. My daughter have her own job. My youngest girl, anyway. My other daughter's married. She live in Moloka'i. My son, the youngest one, he have his own job. Except for the big boy, I have him. So he works with me. I tell him, "You must learn to go out and seek another job because maybe Mother don't live forever, you know. Everybody goes . . ."

IH: Well, if you retire or something, will one of your children take over your business?

MU: Well, this is the thing that we are having. The problem is that the state is not allowing a second name on the space permit.

IH: Oh, in case if you retire or pass away or something, then. . . .

MU: Yeah. If they don't put that second name on it, then I can't retire. I have to keep on going till I drop dead. Then the stand goes back to the state, see. So, if they would allow a second name now for us, because they did when our parents were there. But if they allow

a second name on the space permit, I'd be able to say, "Well, my son will survive me." So his name gets on the list. If anything happens to me, he'd be able to take over the stand. But the only thing the state looking after is finance, whether they can finance themselves. Because all depends on what your parents do, reflects on the younger ones, and you yourself if you own a stand. Whatever you do reflects on the upcoming ones. If they should allow this. So, this is what we're looking into again, that they would allow a second name.

Because, see, we feel this is traditional for us. Because when this thing all started, started family, family, family all the way. But even if you get other people other than family comes into there, they not able to hang on to it. Because see, we're well established. We've been there for years, and years, and years. And people know of you. So if you're a newcomer and you come in there, you're going to get a hard time starting. Because we did have one next to me. They stayed in there for about a year and they left. So right now, I have another person in there. They having a hard time to start. Then, of course, you got . . .

IH: But she's an old-time lei seller, too, yeah?

MU: Oh, yeah. But she comes from down at the ship side. They sell leis down at the ship side. But never . . .

IH: Never on the airport.

MU: At the airport, like we are. So we got to know about the airport, we got to know how to do your business, and have been in there a long time. So if you not established, you just about have to do your utmost best, you can, in order to survive there. Now, maybe some of them might have another business on the outside. That will help you to defray expenses. But then, you're not allowed to have two business. Flower business. You can't do that.

IH: What is that? Is that in the contract?

MU: Well, I think I might have read it, I'm not so sure that you can't have two business. Because at that time when that happened, I had another business outside. I closed it down.

IH: Oh, yeah? They told you to close it down?

MU: Well, I had a choice between that place and the airport. But I felt the airport was picking on . . .

IH: That seems unusual that they wouldn't permit you . . .

MU: It is, it is. Actually, I don't know how the state goes, because the state knew I had a thing outside because, you know, we have audits and stuff like that from the state. So I closed it down to cause no trouble. So, I only have this . . .

IH: But I mean, I don't understand where that kind of a ruling would come in because it doesn't seem right that they could tell you that you couldn't have another business.

MU: Well, I haven't read that in the contract. I've never seen it or I might of because, see, this is why we're trying to find our space permit, our lease permit, to see whether we did have that or we didn't. Because I don't see why you can't have a second business outside.

IH: Yeah, to me, there's no reason why you couldn't.

MU: It's very unusual to have something like that. Well, anyway, I didn't. I closed it down. And then, just held the airport. But see, sometimes I feel, to me, we should have a second business. 'Cause if anything should happen at the airport, you won't be gone altogether. At least you have another spot to go to.

IH: Yeah, to fall back on.

MU: You see. Well, let's say, maybe some big company or the state would open the lei stands for bid. Some big company would buy the lease or they would bid for the lei stand, all twelve, what happens then, to us that's been there? What then? We've been there for many years from our parents. So, this is what we are talking about today, which is rather late for us to do. We should have done it many years ago. Why can't we have two business in case some day we lose the spot where we are. So we no longer can. Some of us, that's all the things we know what to do. Because as the years grow older, it's harder to get your jobs outside. You got to come out of colleges to get a job, unless you want to go into labor where you go back to waitress, barmaid, and all that kind of job. Unless you go to school again, learn about computers, IBMs, and that kind of office jobs. Or what else? Or go and get another kind of business outside, start all over. But you're dead. Where you going to go? All the places are so expensive. You buy one little spot in the corner, they cost you big money already. And before, when the state used to. . . . We used to take the place for once a month. You go on a month-to-month [rental] basis.

IH: Is that the airport?

MU: Yeah. We were doing a month-to-month basis. But today, we have a lease, a fifteen-year lease on it. [Five years have passed.] See, so we're up for negotiation again for another five. So, what then? Is the state going to let us do what we're doing now? Or are they going to be upping on the rent? See, that's the thing. 'Cause right now, nothing is being said. We hear nothing unless we go to the source and talk about it. But the state always says, well, like when first the airport came up. They asked us our opinion what we want, before the lei stands came together. Before they put it . . .

IH: Oh, before you moved into the state [territory]--the airport property?

MU: Yeah, what we want to do for the business. So we tell them what we would like to do, what we should have. We know because we're the people going to be there. But then, we found out, when the stands built up, it's not what we had talked about. So, I understand that the Outdoor Circle has the power. Okay, they have the power to tell what they want, what they don't want. What to plant, what not to plant, where to put it. So, right now, we're looking out. You look right at the coconut tree. It's right in front of your face. That's not how to do the business. So, this beautification, of course, that's fine, but don't put objects in the front of your face like that.

Then, so much parking space. They should open that whole thing as a parking space instead of putting one little cemented sidewalk out there and plant a tree on it. That's one parking space gone. Some guys stay in between. So, when you start to sell your leis, two guys going for the same customers because that one space is divided for two stands. So, how you do it? That's why, they get arguments that they stealing the customer. The customer has the right to stay right there because the parking is that way, further down from us. So, you see, this Outdoor Circle is not there to sit to know what we're doing or how to better the business. So, you want revenue, you've the opportunity to make it. I really don't know what to say as far as that is concerned. So, we asked the guys that was doing the jobs over there. You know why they planting the tree there? Cannot do nothing.

Trying to get them to have the traffic coming off of the [H-1] viaduct and coming off by way of Holiday Inn to come in from Martina's [Lei Stand] and going out from number one. So, they kept saying it's impossible to do it. So, we're going on the word "impossible." Sometimes I think we give up too soon (chuckles) without fighting for it and stuff like that. Now, we trying to make things better for ourselves or for our kids, maybe, someday. So, there we stand.

IH: Do you feel that the lei business has always been Hawaiians? Has it always been mostly Hawaiians doing the business?

MU: Over there at the airport?

IH: Even at the waterfront and Downtown?

MU: Yeah, was mostly Hawaiians. You don't find much Orientals. They're more in the florist business. You don't find Orientals along the way, where Mr. Chang, they were the only Orientals there. He was Chinese and she was Japanese. And of course, Mike Onaga, that's the wife's stand. See, Dorothy Andrade. So, he's Japanese [Okinawan], but he has taken over the stand.

IH: Mm hmm [yes], but his wife was Hawaiian.

- MU: In actuality when he started, it was under Dorothy's, and she was married to Onaga. So this is why Onaga had taken it over, a little thing. So, there was, in that line-up down at the airport, it's mostly Hawaiians that owns it.
- IH: Do you know why it is that other nationalities didn't get into the lei business?
- MU: I never did even try to know why. I never even did look into it. Well, because they had said that they didn't allow florists in the lei stands over there. So, this is the only reason I know of that was told . . .
- IH: Even now, florists are not allowed to sign up on the list?
- MU: Well, as far as I know, as the state is, they have a list upstairs. So if anytime a stand becomes vacant, they will pick it off that list. So, I don't know when there's an Oriental name on that list. See, because we still have some of the lei sellers' daughters that would like to get in there. Charlotte is one, was trying to fight back to get in there. She has all the qualifications for it, but they didn't. 'Cause there were some vacant stands in there, and she couldn't pick up on it. She went to the state for it.
- IH: Yeah, funny, yeah, how come she couldn't get in.
- MU: Well, if this is little bit more confidential, I would, more or less, tell it the way it happened. But I don't know how far your tape going.
- IH: Yeah. Yeah, that's right.
- MU: Maybe off the record. But I know she tried to get in there.
- IH: Oh, that's too bad. Yeah, I thought that she would want to be because she has her own flower farm, yeah?
- MU: Even Queenie, they all tried. Some of them, they like their children to get in there right after them. But I don't know what the future holds for everybody. But this is the reason why I try not to rock the boat. And I try not to get involved with the other lei stands because I feel when you work in there, you're not the boss. Because we have a boss. The State Transportation is the boss, okay. So, you just work and pay your duty and do what you can to survive, keep yourself going. Because you can't about to mingle all over and knowing everybody's business because that's not one of my traits.
- IH: Are you down at the stand seven days a week?
- MU: I'm there every day, unless I have to go out on meetings, or business, or deliver, or pickup, or stuff like that, then I'm gone. And of course, sometimes I go to a party. You know, tired, just sit there every day, all day, all night. I stay there if I have to

make some orders for the next day so that we don't get snagged in between and somebody come a little earlier than they supposed to. I like to have it ready for them. Yeah, that's good business.

IH: So you stay there late? What time do you usually leave the stand?

MU: Oh, sometimes about 12:00, 12:30.

IH: At night?

MU: Yeah. One o'clock.

IH: Ooh. And you're back early in the morning?

MU: Back in the morning. Five o'clock in the morning. But see, I'm a . . .

IH: And you enjoy that?

MU: I do. I really do.

IH: I think you have to enjoy it to be able to do it every day.

MU: I really do, because see, right now, I don't have outside activities that I'd like to go to. See, my days for that is already gone away from me. I'm not too much more for the outside thing. And I enjoy what I do. So, I don't want to . . .

IH: I would think since you grew up from when you were small always with the leis, always stringing leis . . .

MU: Always working, yeah?

IH: . . . always working, that by now, you'd want to slow down.

MU: So, if like today I don't feel like working, I won't. I just sit there and do some other things. You know, catch up with whatever I can.

IH: But you're still there.

MU: But I'm still there.

IH: Because I feel that when your customers come, they like to see the boss. Because if they need a deal, only your boss could do that. The working person cannot do that. So many a times, I've sat there. And they says, "Where's your boss?"

"She's inside."

They come inside, sit down, talk story. They want to do a wedding, I'm able to help them 'cause the other kids don't specialize in the wedding, I do. So they just do the work, that's about all. So many

a times, lot of the customers come down and they go to the lei stand and they says, "Well, I want to buy fifty leis. I have so much money to spend."

The working girl cannot help him. Maybe the boss says, "You sell your leis, four dollars." The guy want to try to get it for three dollars 'cause he wants to get as much leis as he can for \$100 or something like that. So, they're not able to help him. So, if they keep on coming, they'll find me, and I'm able to help them. See, so it's a loss for the other stands.

IH: You know, I notice in the front of your stand there's a man that works there? What is his name?

MU: Yeah. That's my nephew, Charlie (Kane).

IH: Yeah, he's been there for a long time, hasn't he?

MU: Yeah. He's a good person . . .

IH: I notice he's about the only male person in the front.

MU: Yeah. But this is, his mom is a lei seller. But she have a shop in Wahiawā. And she normally sell leis at the ship. So, he's been in this thing all these years, too. Grown up on it. But he has sisters that ventured into other things. They don't want to venture into the lei business, but they help their mom. But my nephew did, you know, he's a good boy.

IH: He's been with you for quite a while, hasn't he?

MU: Yeah. He's an asset to the business. He's got the personality to go with it.

IH: Yeah, he does.

MU: But like a woman, now and then, they get their bitter ends. (Laughs) But otherwise, he's a super guy.

IH: I think, too, because it's unusual that he's the only man in the stands.

MU: But before, we used to have men selling leis down there. Like Billy, Uncle Bill. We call him "Uncle Bill." He passed away now. He used to sell leis down at the airport. We used to have quite a bit of guys (as workers) selling leis, but they eventually, they ventured into other things.

IH: Was there a time they didn't let men go down to the waterfront?

MU: Not at all. Because some of them, their husbands sell leis at the waterfront. Two, husband and wife, have to sell, their kids and all, you see. So, my years, they criticize it so much, and then as

the years went by, their kids started selling leis, eight years, nine years, ten years old. And here, I was the only guy that they were knocking at. Their children get children go down, sell leis. When their children grow up, they make 'em go sell leis, too. See, so I tell 'em . . .

IH: You know, I was under the impression down at the waterfront that most of the lei sellers were like older women, tūtū age, like that.

MU: Yeah. Some of them grow flowers in the yard, like I do. Plumerias, and things in their own yard. So they pick the flowers off the land. Right off their own place. Even like when we have graduation, you see swarms of lei sellers. Where they come from? You don't know where they come from. Like out of the woodwork. And this never happened before. The only unfair thing about it, that we have to pay taxes and some of them don't.

IH: They don't, yeah.

MU: Clear money.

IH: They go out to the schools for graduations?

MU: They do. They go all over the place.

IH: Do you go out?

MU: I used to, but now, I go like to the NBC [Neal Blaisdell Center] and maybe to Kaimukī [High] School. But see, it's such a hassle picking up, putting all your leis, taking it down there, hanging all up for the wind, and the rain, and the sun. Then if you don't sell it all, you take it back. You try to sell it then. It's not worth it anymore. So, you lose if you don't sell it all. Then, if you try to sell it before this thing, the exercise starts, you (chuckles) start selling it cheaper so you don't have to take it back. Those are the only thing about it. That you'd probably lose out if trying to sell it down at graduations. Even at the ship. It isn't an easy job.

Like some of the lei sellers, they come out only once a year, graduation time. Most of the backyard growers, they come out that kind of time. But if they have plenty flowers, they sell the business to the tour companies. You know, "I'll supply you x number of leis, you like," or whatever. That's how. So this is where a lot of the tour companies come away from people like us, because they have a place to get it. But we have people that realize they cannot get, and then they have to have the experience first to know that the person can't supply them. So they go out to find them a place.

But like the tour companies, the airport is an ideal spot for them. Pickup at any time because considering that the lei stands open maybe from five or six o'clock in the morning till midnight. So,

when you come by, you can just pick up your leis and go to the airport already, tour company. Because whereas if you take your leis from the other people that have their flowers and then if they don't show up with it, you don't have it. Then they [the tour company] come down to airport, say, "Can I get fifty leis because the guys never show up," or something with their leis. So, you see, that's the only thing. So, I have some people that I deal with, has been with me for quite a many years because it was convenient for them. So, they walk from the airport to me. Now, they won't be able to walk from the airport to Waimānalo if the leis is coming from there. If the guy don't show up on time, maybe the plane came in earlier, right, so he's looking for his leis. He's not able to contact the person. By the time the person came, he says, "Well, you know, I wanted the lei at 1:30." So you give him a 1:30 time, but the plane came in at 12:30. So, the person going to come give your leis at 1:30 because that's what you said.

IH: Too late already.

MU: It's too late. The flight came in. So they got to go get it someplace else. They got to give the people the lei, otherwise the agent will be there. And they sure not going to like it. Because when they say "greeting you with a lei," you better have it. (Laughs) Otherwise, they'll drop you and pick up somebody else. But that's the only thing, the advantage the airport have, is that easy pickup. But we have some faithful friends that during the holidays, they're there at the airport. So you can't sell your leis too expensive.

IH: But then, like you were saying, you always make quality leis.

MU: I make, but I always try to find the customers something to meet their pocketbook. If they say, "Oh, Moana--" Today, they came. They says, "I only have two dollars, Gladys."

I say, "Okay, I find you something for two dollars." They happy. I cannot say, "Oh, two dollars not enough. You got to get me one more dollar, three dollars."

If they say, "Oh, come on. Give me one, two dollars," and I go tell 'em, "No, no more," they going away. Because no sense they go any further, the rest is three and four dollars. So, I do that. But I normally try to make tour leis, because tour leis is a little cheaper. But you got to know how much flowers to put in your lei.

IH: What's the difference between a tour lei and a regular lei?

MU: The one on the board is--one has more flowers than the other. Because I will make the lei according to what you're paying me on the tour. So, we try to keep the amount of flowers in the lei lesser. Because you still have to pay your taxes. You got to pay for stringing. You got to pay for the other things, the supplies that you have to buy to put it together. And things like that. So, if you don't allow for it, then that lei is dead. You're not making

anything out of it. So, the boss don't get nothing out of there. Everybody else does but the boss. So, this is where you got to try to make a better money on the board leis. Then you have to have money to put in the bank to pay the flowers. So, if you don't do it, then you can't buy your flowers the next day. You says, "Well, I'm not going to take any today. (Chuckles) No 'nough money. We didn't make money." Stuff like that. It's really not that easy. So, I don't know what the state have for us in the future. So this is why you gotta keep yourself prepared. Try to save. But it's so hard because if the flower growers raise [the price of] their flowers, this is where what you're saving is going to have to come out.

IH: How is your relationship with the flower growers?

MU: Terrific.

IH: That's good.

MU: Because, see, I'm in business and I try to keep them in business, too. So I try to take my flowers as much as I can. Because if you say, "Today I don't want," or "Tomorrow I don't want," like that, then they gotta go find a new customer. Because that flowers, my portion, is being stacked up. So, they got to find a new customer. When they find a new customer, when you tell them, "Today I have an order. Can you give me plenty, 2,000 more?"

"We don't have it."

How can you accept an order? Because they cannot give it to you already. They found somebody else to take it. See, this is one thing. So, they [the state] feel if you take tons of 'em [orders], you should have tons of money. But that's wrong. It's not right. Like they say, they don't care how you do it, you just pay your commitment, that's all. But it's a hard thing. That's why, I think, somehow, although we worked hard in the years before, but you were more at peace.

IH: Before?

MU: Mm hmm [yes]. You were more at peace than today.

IH: Why do you think that is?

MU: Because today, it's bigger money. Bigger money today than it was of before. But you work . . .

IH: So, that's bigger headaches?

MU: Yeah, bigger headaches. But like they say, if you're a good business person, you should come out in the wash and it wouldn't be that much. But I don't believe that, I really don't. Because see, we're small business people. We're not big business people. We're not the kind where you can take a bigger deduction in the business, like

you take big stores, big company. They can take bigger deductions. We can't do that. If we say we lost the flowers that I bought today, maybe \$100 worth of flowers, a half of it is no good. I chart it down for the year, spoilage. Or maybe x number of leis got jammed up, spoil, chalk it down again. So how much does that take out? How much of that spoilage? Or how much of the amount of leis are you taking out? 'Cause the lei was three dollars and I had about fifty leis taken out. That's three dollars a lei. How much is taken out of that for you at the end of the year? Not very much. The write-off isn't as much. If you take a big store and say, "Ey, this bundle of clothes has got wet boxes." And if four or five boxes sitting there, they going throw the whole four or five of 'em away. That's big deductions. Maybe you have \$3,000 worth of goods in this box and that box. That's how much thousands of dollars you can write off. That's big business. But with lot of small people, small business people, it's hard for them to do that. And our flowers . . .

IH: But you know, even as a small business, it takes a certain type of person to be able to run the business.

MU: Yes.

IH: And so, I was thinking, gee, how did all those people who started so long ago be able to last all this time in the lei business?

MU: (Chuckles) Like I said, you got to keep your head on your shoulder. Don't ever turn your head. When you turn your head, you keep looking behind, this is where you hit the stone wall. You always have to look forward.

IH: Was your mother a good businesswoman?

MU: Well, my mother never graduated out of high school. My mother graduated out of sixth grade.

IH: But how was she able to run her business?

MU: Well, whatever knowledge she had and experience. She learned by her experience every day. Because, you know, the old folks, that's all they went with what they know and experienced. Sometimes, she used to ask the old folks how they were doing and how they started. You learn from that, too. Then, of course, after that, it'll be up to you. You have to look on all sides of you how to conduct it. So, there are times you get a little bit heartbroken, a little bit depressed. Lot of depression in this business. See, sometimes if you can't cope with your bills, you go into depression. Stress hangs along with that. Stress, fear and depression gets on you.

IH: Fear?

MU: Yeah. You know, like how you going to pay the flowers or how you're going to pay your taxes. How you're going to pay them? This is

where fear sets in. So, this is why, if you just sell leis on the board, it's not to your advantage. It isn't very much of an advantage. You got to pick up on something else, like a tour company. Or you got to pick up on doing other things. Making wreaths, making things like that, like I say, in order to generate your financial in there. Because if today, you only selling leis, you making leis and the customer don't like what you have, they going to look next door. They going to take a walk. So, if I have a display of different types of leis and it catches the eye of the person that's walking, I will make it. So, you then have to spend money to make money. You have to get things that the people like, especially when you deal with local people.

But you have Orientals that come up. Other people, Filipinos, they like cheap leis. Samoans, and so forth. So, you always got to make that kind of leis, too. So, when they come, they say, "I like cheap lei. I like two. You can give me two for three dollars?" What are (chuckles) you going to say? So, you lose the sale, but that's three dollars. So you find them something for three dollars. Two plumeria leis or something like that. So, I normally keep leis made cheaper for the cheaper guys when they say. Medium type of leis, expensive type of leis. Whatever you want, it's going to be in there somewhere. But if you don't, then you lost the sale. So when they come to me, they not going to move 'cause I'm going to make the sale. Even if it's just three dollars, that's three dollars because they not going to get three dollars. So maybe you don't have so much sales for the day because you couldn't try to work it out with the customer.

IH: How expensive do the leis get? You know, like really expensive leis like double gingers and . . .

MU: Well, if you buy leis, all depends. Your double leis become expensive, like double ginger. Twelve dollars is still too cheap for double ginger. So we make double tuberose with roses. If you sell 'em twelve dollars, it's still too cheap. Because you count the amount of tuberose you put in there, plus the roses, the ferns, the baby's breath. That's still too cheap for twelve dollars. Fifteen dollars, I can see. But not (chuckles) everybody you can sell 'em for fifteen dollars. So even if you sell 'em for twelve dollars, that's a gain, that's not a loss. See? So, this is the reason you have to practically count your flowers in there. The cost of your flowers. Maybe go up a penny more. If you bought it for two cents . . .

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 14-12-1-85; SIDE ONE

MU: So, I try to be a good Samaritan to my customers as well. Because they always come back.

IH: They come back, yeah.

MU: Yeah. Some of them recommend. Sometimes I do some business overseas. Some people take the lei from here and they go up there maybe for a convention. Then they ask 'em, "Where did you get your leis from?"

They say, "Oh, latch on to Gladys Lei Stand. She'll help you." Sometimes if you can't do it from here, you got to go to the Mainland. But not too very often, because it's so much trouble to pack. Pack it up. Pack the leis, take it down to the cargo office. You know, lot of work to do that. So, if you slap 'em with the bill for packing and shipping and everything, then it becomes expensive.

IH: Yeah, it does.

MU: See. Because I have to get on my car, carry it with me, take it down there. So, lot of them don't want to go into paying extra than what they want to do. Only if they willing, fine, but if not I wouldn't do it. Because it takes a lot of time to pack up. You got to be sure that you got to get ti leaves and put it in a box. That costs you extra money to buy it, the ti leaves.

IH: Do the flowers ever get there dead?

MU: No.

IH: It does last.

MU: So, you got to string today, put it away in the ice box right away. Don't let it sit out. Give it a chance to get crispy, get cold. Then just before, about an hour before shipping, pack it. Take it right down, tell her to chill it till it gets there. They pick it up in good condition.

IH: And you send it on the airplane? Cargo?

MU: Yeah. Cargo. But then it all depends on what you send that keeps. You cannot send pikake. You got to give it special care. You got to put ice--ice in the boxes. See, the boxes that we have, it's not so very good for shipping. But like in the Mainland, they sell those foam boxes that they foam it. You know, to keep the cold in it. But they don't sell it here, yet.

IH: Oh, they don't have those over here? I know that some of the airlines have . . .

MU: Only for overseas. That's where they put the flowers in.

IH: . . . foam boxes and they have that dry ice to cover or something. They don't have that here?

MU: No. They don't have the boxes unless you tell those guys, the supplier, to do it. But there's a lot of things you can learn that

you need to learn. Even flowers. As far as flower's concerned. Because we don't know all the flowers in the world. We only know what we used, what we do every day. But then, there's a lot of other flowers in the land that you should know about. But we don't need to know it if we don't need it.

IH: Yeah, right.

MU: Enough problems with what you have. (Laughs) You know, trying to put it together.

IH: Yeah. But you have lots of varieties of flowers.

MU: I try to make things different. See, if I string, I make a pattern of my own that covers one box. The next box I pick up, I make another pattern using different flowers.

IH: Oh, so you're always creating new leis . . .

MU: Yeah, I create new ideas in there. I make my own design of leis, where it's attractive. And I don't bring them out to sell. I leave it in my icebox and sell it from there. Because the ideas get spread around. (Chuckles) If I have a fancy lei made up, I don't wish to have it being spread out, out there. Like all the leis I put on my board, as you can see, it's spread out from number one [lei stand] to twelve. So, now had I not bring those designs into the lei stand down there, it will never have happened. I introduced roses out there.

IH: Oh, yeah?

MU: Yeah. I introduced the proteas out there. 'Cause I went to San Diego and got it, brought it back, made it into lei with the plumeria, orchid.

IH: Was that before they started growing proteas in Maui?

MU: Then I found out that they were growing it in Maui, the company that I bought it from. So I bought me about 200 of them, brought it home. And found out that they have an outlet in Maui. So then I started to deal that way. But then, already, I had all these things designed out from it. Then I introduced [a new style for] the chrysanthemums. I fashion it. You know, the whole works had it. When they have it, I quit it, go into something else. Then I fashioned the roses down there.

IH: So, the flowers, are they constantly changing? Are they different now than from before?

MU: No, not really. Well, you mean the leis of before?

IH: Mm hmm [yes].

MU: Well, they never did have roses and things before. The things they had most was plumerias, and gingers. Not much in tuberose. Not much in carnation. Those things, only if you could afford it, those kind of leis. If you can afford to buy them, that was fine. You'd have it.

IH: But now, those are the most common, huh? Tuberose and carnation and all that.

(Interview interrupted, then resumes.)

MU: But like I said, then I've grown up in the business and I felt somebody should carry the tradition of my mom's hard years. (Forty-eight) years my mom has been there in the business. So, I don't say I'm going to go for (forty-eight) years (chuckles), you understand. But I will go for as long as I could hang on.

IH: Do you think it's important for one of your children to take over? Is it important to you?

MU: I think so. I'd like to see this go on like from my mom to me, from me to my children. Maybe someday, their children. Like my brother, he have his shop [Libert's Leis and Florist], stemming from my mom. Him, now his daughter, his oldest daughter. She now runs the shop. She takes care of it. She hope that someday her sisters or her children will someday take care of it, too. See, because we expect that, because we've been in it. We've come from it. And it has been our livelihood through the many years that we worked. Till today, it is still our livelihood, out of what we have been doing. My husband being in the service retired and found out that as the years went by he was a sick man but never did say it to anybody, right? Then, he's not able to work for a while. Then he passed away.

IH: Did he help you at the stand?

MU: Most of his time, no. When he can, he comes down. But he works, too, see, before. Then, after a while, he started to stay home, take care of the house and stuff. But I used to send flowers for him to do for me in case I need the help real badly. So, just last year I lost him. So this is what I'm saying, this is our livelihood. Now, had I not latched on to it and did something else, I never can say what the future held for me then. But here I am, and this seemed to have been my lifestyle, is the lei business. But I felt somebody had to carry on from my mom. And somebody had to carry on the hard work that we did. Here I am. (Chuckles) I picked it all up.

IH: I'm sure she's happy that you're doing it, you know. Because it's something that she built up for herself and for you folks.

MU: That's true. So, when she went into it, I felt that she's lining it up for us to hang on to it. Although she didn't say it, but reading

between the lines . . .

IH: Did she ever go and deal with military?

MU: My mom?

IH: Uh huh [yes].

MU: She used to.

IH: You know, like during World War II, I think they had.

MU: Well, she used to do military with the USO [United Service Organizations].

IH: Yeah?

MU: Yeah. She did lots with the USO at that time. Because the people that were in the USO people always came to her. I don't know how, but they did. My mother had lot of people from out of nowhere for recommendation.

IH: So, during the war, she still was selling leis?

MU: Yeah, she was still selling leis, and she went to work, too.

IH: Oh, she did?

MU: Yeah.

IH: What was she doing?

MU: Making camouflage things, those nets and things. She worked and sell leis at the same time, my mother. She was selling leis and working cannery, at the same time.

IH: So, she was working with Mrs. Makaiwi, then, in the camouflage?

MU: Yes, yes. That old lady was a great person, a fighter. She would fight for the lei sellers, that lady. Always down the legislature. Lobbyist. She's a lobbyist. She goes down there. Terrific person. Too bad we had to lose her.

IH: So, were there a lot of lei sellers working in that camouflage unit?

MU: I think only about my mom and her, I think, was the only ones that was working for them at that time.

IH: 'Cause I know Martina [Macalino] said that, yeah, they worked. Both her and her mother [Agnes Makaiwi], I think, worked down there.

MU: Yes, they were the only ones. But I know that my mom had a hard life because she used to work selling leis, working at the cannery,

too. Right after she pau in the morning, seven o'clock, go sell leis.

IH: Oh, she work at night in the cannery?

MU: Yeah, night in the cannery. The morning shift . . .

IH: And daytime selling leis?

MU: . . . like eleven to seven [o'clock], or something like that.

IH: When did she sleep?

MU: When she can.

IH: On the lei stand?

MU: No, she sleep when she can. Sometimes, us, we go down, watch the stand. We stay down there and she go in the car and go to sleep. I never forget her years as long as I live. My mom was young. She died young [at age sixty-nine]. But I guess too many years of hard work.

IH: Did she ever go down to Waikīkī to the nightclubs and things like that?

MU: You mean, selling leis, like that? No. She never did. She didn't need to, she had enough work already. But she used to go to Lau Yee Chai [Restaurant]. You know, the old Lau Yee Chai? She used to go inside there and sell leis until she got tired. Too much for her to go back and forth. So she gave it up. Then Ellarene's mom [Irene Sims] went in there.

IH: Went in there, yeah.

MU: So, in all those years when we were young, we were all hula dancers. Ellarene [Asing Yasuhara] was, myself, Charlotte [Ventura Fuller] folks, Queenie [Ventura Dowsett] folks.

IH: Oh, yeah?

MU: Yeah. You'd be surprised.

IH: Oh, you guys all went together?

MU: Well, we each dance separate places. You know, in our own. She was with the kids at the [Hilton] Hawaiian Village, Ellarene. I was with the Niumalu [Hotel] and the Sands (Hotel on Kalākaua). Before, used to be with the Joshuas and all of them. Those were nice days.

IH: Rose Joshua? Oh, yeah?

MU: Yeah. Auntie Rose with the girls, with her children, . . .

IH: She was your teacher?

MU: . . . her girls, Punani Alama, and all of them. I come from a long line of teachers I used to have before. My first teacher was Tom Hiona when I was three years old. I don't know if you know of Eloise DeOrso? She was on the commercials. She was on the Zippy commercials, if you seen her, yeah. Eloise DeOrso, Eloise Kanoe, and myself. We were the three young dancers from Tom Hiona. We grew up there. Then when Kent Ghirard, Mama Bishop . . .

IH: When you were young, you danced professionally?

MU: Yeah. So, I had quite a bit of teachers in my years. And we danced outside. We danced USO, all those kind of places. It used to be a thrill for me because we used to put on makeup. So the next day, I go to school with it.

IH: Oh, no. (Laughs)

MU: Oh, was a thrill when you put all those rouge and stuff on. I used to love to put on their makeups. So, I go to school and the kids used to call me "Flapper Fanny" and all of that.

(Laughter)

MU: At first I used to cry because they called me "Flapper Fanny." I didn't know what the word "Flapper Fanny" was. Then the teacher told me take all the junk off my face. (Laughs) So, then, after that, my mom, when I go school the next day, she take it all off.

(Laughter)

MU: I was enjoying it, though, you know. Plenty makeup because you have to go in the front of the lights. And we were getting older as time went by. Yeah, I danced for a long time, and so did Ella. And of course, Queenie. And Charlotte. They danced, too. So, before, all five of us used to dance, my sisters. All five of us used to dance for Kent Ghirard. I danced for Uncle Bill Lincoln, Mama Bishop, Mrs. Montgomery, Auntie Sally Woods, and all of them, teachers. Today, I can even teach, but I don't have the time to do that.

IH: Yeah. So when you were dancing when you were young, did they pay you?

MU: Oh, yes.

IH: Did you have to give it to your mother?

MU: Yeah, my mom did. She did it. She put it away for me. And then, like now, I joined all these Lioness Club, other activities, other than the lei stand. Because I joined the Royal Order of Kamehameha because we have conventions every year and we go to different islands on convention. I joined the (Mokulele) Lioness. I joined quite a

bit of clubs. Hui Aloha, the Hale O Na Ali'i, and the DAV [Disabled American Veterans], I'm a lifetime member. Veteran's of Foreign Wars, American Legion . . .

IH: Gee, when do you have time for these organizations?

MU: I don't. I pay my dues. But I go because of my husband. He joined all of these things, and up comes me, too. So, I find these outside things as an activity for me, outside activity. Get away from the lei stands like that. So, like the Lionesses, we are community-service people, so we do outside work. You know, fundraising and sponsoring international youth centers where the kids from overseas come and we host them, like thirty kids. We take them all over the place in the island. Take them to PCC [Polynesian Cultural Center], Kodak hula shows, tours, and stuff down here. We do all of that. We support the eye bank, the Makana Foundation. My brother is a fanatic for this kind of thing. Yeah, very intelligent person. So he got us to join this. So, every since then, I've been. We're a young club starting. We opened--they were only Lions at first. Then they opened a Lioness. So, we're about three years old. Other clubs, and we were a young club with a lot of young women.

IH: So, that's only women, then, huh?

MU: Well, yes. But . . .

IH: And it is affiliated with the Lions Club?

MU: Yeah. Well, we have the Airport Lions. So, we are the Lioness. Mokulele Lioness. But the Lions, we look to them as our--like the overseer for us. We pass everything through them before we can do anything else. Same thing like the clubs, the Hawaiian club. We are one of the uniques, the (Royal) Order of Kamehameha (I), because they're made of men. The Order of Kamehameha once upon a time were only men. There were never women involved. And Mrs. (Lahapa) Kauhane started the women's auxiliary in that. So, she's done it for years and years. Got a lot of women in that Order of Kamehameha. So now we are combined, but we are ruled by the men. We don't rule ourselves. Everything that we do will be recommended or taken off by the men. I joined that eleven years in there now. So this is what? Twelve years about for me. Long time. We have good women in there for many years, but lot of the women now have passed away. Some of them, cannot keep, so we're bringing more younger women. So, it's a long time for me for these clubs as well. (Laughs) But I just keep myself active. You know, just pay my dues. Whenever I can make it, I make it. But like now, I have to stay real active because I became the president (of the Royal Order of Kamehameha). I got to get it, hang in there.

IH: Oh, no.

(Laughter)

MU: Every time I got to get to a meeting. That's why, I'm always gone from there [the lei stand] whenever we have our meetings. And convention time, I'm forever gone for a while. When we go overseas, I'm gone again from there. But it's once a year.

IH: Do you worry about your business when you're away?

MU: Of course.

(Laughter)

MU: Of course. I say, "Well, you take care of this. It's yours," but, you know . . .

IH: It's not the same as doing it yourself.

MU: No rest. No rest for me. I got to call. I want to see how they're doing and see that everything, they work in harmony, whatever. So I let my children take care of that. You know, my small son get down there, my oldest son, my daughter-in-law . . .

IH: Oh, so they take care of your place [the lei stand]?

MU: . . . my younger daughter. Yeah, they spearhead the different things. They got to work together. This way, I don't worry as much, but I worry anyway. So they say, "Oh, don't worry, Mom, we got everything take cared of." And they don't call me.

So, I said, "You folks are fibbing, I think, yeah? Because this way, you folks don't want me to worry about anything."

They say, "No, Ma." Even my baby, she say, "No, Mommy, we're fine. We're taking care of it. Don't you worry your head. You go ahead and have a good time. We take care of everything." (Chuckles) She's such a cutie-pie, oh, my goodness, the way she talks.

IH: Oh, your daughter?

MU: My youngest daughter.

IH: What's her name?

MU: Lynette. You know, Lurline? That's her daughter. I hanaied that one from her.

IH: From her, oh.

MU: I took care of her for two years. And then, when we were going overseas, I didn't want to give her up. (Laughs) We got to love her. Anyway Hawaiian say, when you mālama something, it's going to become yours. It's hard to give it up. (Laughs) So when we wen go overseas, my husband says, "Well, we got to go."

I says, "Where?"

He says, "We're going to Germany."

I said, "I don't want to go."

He says, "Why? It's once in a lifetime. You may not have the opportunity to go."

I said, "I know that. I won't go if I can't take her [Lynette] with me."

So I picked up her father. I took her to my lawyer. Call my lawyer and I tell him, "I want to adopt this girl that I have."

"How about the parents?"

I said, "I'll bring 'em to you." (Laughs)

The next day, I picked the father, the parents, I took 'em to my lawyer. I tell the lawyer, "Explain everything to the father of this child."

So, the lawyer said, "Well, it's up to you. You read it. If you want to let her have the girl, then you sign the paper."

So, I tell him, "You know, if want to." I said, "I'm not going to force you. Okay. I didn't bring the girl in the world. But if you want to sign her over to me, then you go ahead and do that." I said to him, "Sign the paper. You never take care of her. My sister hand her over to me."

When they signed that paper, the next day, I told my husband, "You go put in on the paper. Put her in as your dependent and we're leaving." He went down to the . . .

IH: And you folks went?

MU: A week later, we went. We left.

IH: How long were you in Germany?

MU: Three years. I enjoyed it. I loved it. It's different. But like I say, there's nothing like your hometown. You know how to live in your hometown. But I don't say I had an all bad life in my years. You get a good and bad, and you suffer a little. You take the bitter and the sweet. It's how you do it. It's how you make your life. But like I said, along with the Good Lord I've seen my days go over. I've asked him so many times for His help and I got it. (Chuckles) So, everything's fine so far. But like I said, it's up to you. Up to the individual. You take care of your own thing. Don't go mind other people's business. Take care of yourself because you'll find that they need the help as much as you do. So, they

come to me. Says, "Oh, Moana, can I get this," or "Moana, could you?" I never turn down. I always help. I never did [refuse]. If I have it, you can have it.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops.)

END OF INTERVIEW

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ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

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